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THE
NATURAL HISTORY
OF
Gloucester-shire.

By ABEL WANTNER, Citizen of GLOUCESTER.

CHAP. I.

Of the Ancient City of Gloucester, from its
Original.

AFTER such time as *Julius Cesar* had compeld the *Britains*, to become Tributaries to the *Roman Empire*, *Ann. Mundi 2015*. He by reason of the civil wars that arose at *Rome*, was obliged to continue at Home for many Years. During which time, either through his remiss Government, or else being not mindful of those Kingdoms and Provinces, which had sworn Allegiance unto him, they revolt from their Obedience, insomuch, that after his Decease, the succeeding Emperours, (*viz.*) *Octavian Augustus*, *Tiberius Claudius*, and *Cajus Caligula*, thought it more Prudence, carefully to preserve what they had already gotten, rather than uncertainly to grasp at any more: By which means *Britain* was left, as it were, almost forgotten; until one *Bericus*, a Noble-man, Born in *Britain* (who for Sedition, and other high Misdemeanours, was expel'd his Native Country) greatly solicited *Claudius*, the Son of *Drucis*, who was newly chosen Emperour, by the Pretorian Souldiers (*Ann. Dom. 43.*) to reduce *Britain* again to the *Roman Obedience*; who being over-perswaded thereunto, *Claudius Cesar* raiseth a powerful Army out of *Gaul* (or *France*) and other Places, and sends them against *Britain*, under the Conduct of *Aulus Plautius*, his *Prætorius*, or Deputy (*Ann. Dom. 44.*) who, having crossed the Seas, landeth his Army without Opposition, and giveth Battle to *Togodumus*, their King, whom he forceth to a Retreat: But in this their good Success they did not long continue, for the *Britains* did so assault the *Romans*, with their daily Fighting, and Skirmishing,

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missing, that *Aulus Plautius* was constrained to send to *Rome* for *Claudius Cesar* (according to his own Appointment before, if Occasion so required) who after some Dangers upon the Seas, safely arrived in *Britain*, and soon joins his Forces with *Aulus Plautius*, his Deputy.

The Success of whose War, according to *Dion*, was the taking of *Camolodunum*, (now *Maldon* in *Essex*) the chief Seat of the *British* Kings; the Subjection of that part thereof next the *Gauls*, the disarming of the Inhabitants, and the placing of a Colony of old *Roman* Souldiers therein, *Claudius Cesar* being the first that ever fixed a compleat Conquest in *Britain*.

These Things being happily atchiev'd, *Cesar*, at the End of six Months, returned to *Rome*, leaving *Publius Ostorius Scapula*, his *Prætor*, (or Deputy) to end the War; who soon reduced the higher Part of *Britain* into the Form of a *Roman* Province; taking the *Dobunies* (who then possess'd *Oxfordshire*, and *Gloucestershire*,) into his Protection.

But our *British* Historians (*viz.*) *Jeffery* of *Monmouth*, *Llanquet*, and Others relate these Things far otherwise; saying, That *Arviragus*, the Youngest Son of *Cunobeline*, (not *Togodumus*) was King of the *Britains*, *Ann. Dom.* 45. In which Year, (say they) *Claudius Cesar* came in Person against *Britain*, who, when he could not obtain it by Force of Arms, came to a Composition with *Arviragus*, and gave him his Daughter *Jennissa* in Marriage, which Marriage, (say they) was consummated at *Gloucester*. Hereupon King *Arviragus*, to make the Town more famous, where this Marriage was solemnized, did not only Beautify the same, but he likewise greatly Enlarged it with new Buildings, and gave it the Name of *Claudia-Castria*, or (*Castrum*,) alluding to *Claudius Cesar*'s Name.

But *William* of *Malmsbury*, an approved Author, tells you, that these were idle Fables, begun by *Jeffery* of *Monmouth*, and carried on by their Historians, and Commentators, Men altogether ignorant and unskilful in Antiquity, whose Truth and Authority is so much to be doubted, that no Man of Sense will give any Credit to them.

Now *Dr. Plott*, in his History of *Oxfordshire* (pag. 135.) saith, That if it be urged out of *Ponticus Virinius*, and some Others, that the Emperour *Claudius* was at *Gloucester*, and that he either Enlarged, or Built that City, after his own Name, in Memory of the Marriage of his Daughter *Jennissa*, with *Arviragus*, the then King of the *Britains*: Nevertheless (saith he) it must be answered, That notwithstanding the Name of *Claudia-Castrum*, (now *Gloucester*) yet, in all likelihood, there was never any such Matter; for neither *Suetonius* nor *Dion*, (who both lived in

in his time, and had each of them born the Office of Consul,) do make mention of any such Name as *Jennissa*, or that she was so disposed of by him in Marriage, altho' they both do number up how many Children *Claudius Cesar* had. Besides all this, the Dr. further adds, How was it possible that *Claudius Cesar*, who came hither, and returned back to *Rome* in six Months, should have so much time as to come to *Gloucester*, being a Place far in the Country, much more to build or re-edify that City? For *Dion* expressly saith, that *Claudius Cesar* was but sixteen Days in *Britain*, and in all Probability, those sixteen Days were spent in ordering his Army, and that *Arviragus* was not known to *Claudius Cesar*, but that he rather lived in the time of *Domitian* the sixth in Succession after him.

Now altho' it cannot be certainly proved (by any reputable Author) who was *Gloucester's* first Founder, yet most certain it is, that the *Romans* did Build it, and that of set Purpose to be like a Yoke, as it were, upon the Necks of the *Silures*, a fierce and warlike People, who then possess'd all that Tract of Ground, which lieth between the two great Rivers, (*viz.*) *Wye* and *Severn*, called by the ancient *Britains*, *Vaga*, and *Hafferne*, of purpose to curb their violent Incurfions. And it is altogether as certain, that the Emperour *Antoninus* gave it the Name of *Glevum*, and that he there planted a Colony of *Roman* Soldiers, which were called, according to *Ptolomy*, *Coloni-Glevum* (or the *White Colony*) and to confirm the same, the learned *Cambden*, in his former Treatise saith, (fol. 36.) That there was an ancient Inscription, found upon a Quadrant Stone in the Walls of *Bath*, (*viz.*) *Dec. Colonia Glev. vixit, Ann. LXXXVI.*

It farther appears, that after the Extirpation of the *Romans*, that the *Saxons* gave it the Name of *Glav-cestre*, which Word, according to *Ninius*, (as Mr. *Cambden* well observeth) came from *Glev*, and so proportionably *Glevum*, from the *British* Word *Caire-Glow*, which signifieth, white, fair, or splendid; derived or taken from the High Duke *Glovi*, or *Glovis*, Great-Grandfather to King *Vortigern*, from whence *Glovernia*, after whom, the *Latines* called it *Gloucestriae*, and the Vulgar *Gloucester*, &c.

Having thus far spoken of its Original Foundation, and Name, come we, in the next place, to treat of the Honour and Reputation it had in the time of the *Britains*, with other Remarks to the Conquest, and from thence you have Variety of Observations, to the Reign of King *Henry* the Eighth, who made it a City.

I find nothing recorded, by any reputable Author, concerning the City, or Town, of *Gloucester*, during the time that the *Romans* were here in *Britain*: Neither have I met with any thing that

may be termed remarkable, till the coming in of *Hengist*, Prince of the *Pagan Saxons*, who, through their perfidious Treachery, flew four Hundred and Sixty of the *British* Nobility upon the Plain of *Amsbury*, within three Miles of *Salisbury*, at a Place called since *Stone-Henge*; which Stones are said to have been there erected as a Monument, or Memorial of that most bloody and barbarous Slaughter. Amongst whom, at that time, was the valiant *Eldol*, Duke of *Gloucester*, Brother unto *Eldade*, Bishop of *Gloucester*: Who finding of a Stake, which by chance lay on the Ground, He, with his own Hands, flew (according to *Sr. William Dugdale*) Seventeen of those *Saxons*, and afterwards made his Escape to his Dukedome of *Gloucester*, where he raised what Forces he could procure, and at Place called *Maezbel*, on the North of *Humber*, meets with *Hengist*, gives him Battle, and defeats his Army. (*Cambden* out of *Higden*, fol. 208.)

Ethelstan, the 25th King of the *West-Saxons*, Died at *Gloucester*, but was Buried at *Malmsbury* in *Wiltshire*, *Ann. Dom.* 940.

King *Edward* the Confessor held a famous Parliament at *Gloucester*, *Ann. Dom.* 1503. During which time *Gruffith*, King of *South-Wales*, Rebelled; and, with thirty Sail of *Danish* Ships, entereth the River *Severn*, doing great Spoil to the Country: But at last he was taken at *Bullen-Dane*, the same we now call *Bully*, and there Beheaded, and afterwards his Head was presented to King *Edward*, at *Gloucester*.